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EDITORIAL—

Let's Not Make Same Cuban Fiasco Again

TUESDAY EVENING'S NBC-TV White Paper, Chet Huntley presiding, detailed the agony and the stupidity of the Bay of Pigs venture against Castro's Cuba. It was, alas, a masterful documentary of American ineptitude and deceit.

In retrospect, the sole individual who emerges unstained — outside of the poor devils taking an active part in the invasion — is Sen. William J. Fulbright, the knowledgeable chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Asked his opinion of the impending attack, Fulbright told President Kennedy it was immoral, and perhaps in these days of power politics what is even more important, doomed to failure.

The principal villain of the affair was this nation's Central Intelligence Agency. Its agents infiltrated the ranks of the volunteer organization, which had been formed in Miami for the purpose of eventually invading

Cuba, and took over supervision of the independence movement. They enlisted Cuban exiles, moved them to Guatemala, trained and equipped them.

That was bad enough, but they went further.

They promised American support and intervention in the invasion — a promise that hadn't been authorized by President Kennedy. Whether Allen Dulles on his own, then CIA chieftain, or Dulles' subordinates in Washington on their own, in expectation of presidential acquiescence, authorized such promises isn't clear.

The point is, the CIA had no right to expect authorization from President Kennedy. Indeed, when a top CIA official (Bissell) came to Kennedy the night the president was entertaining members of the Cabinet for the first time at the White House and urged him to put Americans into battle in order to save the situation, Kennedy was adamant:

"Americans shooting Cubans — NO, NO, NO."

It is conceivable the CIA might have expected authorization from President Eisenhower, under whom the initial preparations for the attack started, but that's rank speculation, because President Eisenhower's role in the whole business remains an almost total mystery.

In any event, as he should have, President Kennedy shouldered responsibility for the entire unfortunate mess, but, as the program makes absolutely clear, he was a victim of circumstances. The advice given him, except by Fulbright, was awful. That he didn't heed Fulbright was his one catastrophic mistake, making certain all those that were to follow, and probably explains why he was willing to blame himself for the blunder.

No American can watch the bare photographic evidence of this shallow, shadowy exploit in undercover failure without being deeply shocked and ashamed. The sight and sound of an American ambassador to the United Nations, especially an individual of Adlai Stevenson's reputation and abilities, lying — albeit unknowingly — to the world aren't easily or gracefully accepted.

The Bay of Pigs was worse than a tragedy. It was a fiasco and a completely unnecessary fiasco at that. And for those who would rectify the mistake by starting all over again — this time with U. S. troops in the assault waves wading ashore, the words of President Kennedy shouldn't be forgotten:

"Americans shooting Cubans — NO, NO, NO."